



STATE OF MICHIGAN
FAMILY INDEPENDENCE AGENCY
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

December 16, 2004

Ron Dzwonkowski
Editorial Page Editor
Detroit Free Press
600 W. Fort Street
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Mr. Dzwonkowski:

The editorial, "*Ariana's Law: Michigan children will soon have greater protection*," suggested the Family Independence Agency does not support Ariana's Law.

The FIA does support Ariana's Law. Our department worked closely with the Legislature on the compromise language for the bills that created Ariana's Law.

The safety of Michigan's children is always our first priority, and to that end our priority is to assure that our workers act in the best interest of the children in their care. Most of our staff choose this line of work so they can make a positive difference in the lives of children and their families. Our staff put themselves on the line for children and families in Michigan every day.

FIA has not released children's files in the past to assure compliance with Michigan confidentiality laws cited in the state's Child Protection Law – not because the FIA and its staff are trying to hide something from the public. Part of protecting Michigan's children is protecting their confidentiality, as well as the privacy of their siblings. We absolutely believe, however, that we must be accountable to the public for our actions.

We support Ariana's Law and commend Representative Hager for his lifelong commitment to children and their families. We look forward to continuing to work with the Office of the Children's Ombudsman to help make lives better for the children and families we mutually serve.

Sincerely,

Marianne Udow
Director, Michigan Family Independence Agency